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SUBJECT: PORTUGAL UNDECIDED ON UN MIGRATION FORUM

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¶1. (SBU) Pol/Econ Officer paid a call on MFA Migration Issues Officers Ana Trincao and Helga Bras on August 2 to discuss the U.S. position on the UN's proposed immigration forum and our concerns about replicating International Organization for Migration's (IOM) mandate unnecessarily. In response to that and other points from the reftel demarche, Bras replied that migration is very important to Portugal and that the GOP plans to wait and see how the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) in New York on September 14-15 will be managed before it decides whether to support future UN migration discussions.

¶2. (SBU) Although Trincao agreed that the UN might overlap somewhat with IOM, she argued that, given the size and scope of the UN, a UN-sponsored discussion might add weight to the issue and inspire a more robust dialogue than the current migration entities can promote on their own. Pol/Econ officer asked about the Portuguese Interior Minister Costa's recent announcement that migration issues will be a key policy component for Portugal's July-December 2007 EU Presidency. Both women agreed that Portugal is intent on keeping immigration issues on the front burner, not only with other EU nations, but also with other Lusophone nations and with the United States. Trincao stressed that, until recently, Portugal had been a net emigrant country and therefore is sympathetic to the problems facing immigrants. At the same time, Portugal has become a net immigrant nation within the last decade and is working on modernizing immigration regulations and establishing a sustainable policy for immigrants.

¶3. (SBU) Bras noted that, in the event the HLD proves itself unproductive, Portugal would oppose an ongoing dialogue, but underscored that the GOP hopes the HLD will provide a new space for discussions with nations from various regions concurrently. Bras added that the GOP representative to the HLD plans to press source nations to improve economic, political, and social conditions so their citizens are less inclined to emigrate as well as urging recipient nations to practice a humane and incorporative policy on their end.  
Hoffman